



**California Department of
Pesticide Regulation**

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW about

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PESTICIDE REGULATION

Using Disinfectants, Sanitizers, Medical Sterilants, and Other Antimicrobials in the Workplace

State law requires maintaining a safe workplace. It is also good business practice. Many employers are not aware that pesticides are in common use in their businesses.

Many kinds of pesticides

A pesticide is any substance intended to destroy pests, control their activity, or prevent them from causing damage. The target pest may be any living organism that causes damage or economic loss, or transmits or produces disease.

"Pesticide," then, is a general term that includes many kinds of chemicals. Disinfectants, medical sterilants and sanitizers are pesticides because they are designed to destroy or inactivate disease-producing bacteria and other microorganisms.

The same goes for fungicides, where the target pests are mold, mildew, and similar organisms, and algicides, which control algae in spas, swimming pools, lakes, canals, and water used industrially or stored. As a group, these chemicals are called "antimicrobial pesticides." Using them incorrectly can put your employees at risk.

About a third of the pesticide illnesses reported annually in California are associated with antimicrobial use. Most illnesses are minor, such as an employee accidentally splashing bleach in his or her eyes, developing a rash on unprotected skin, or suffering respiratory problems from inhaling fumes.

However, serious illnesses can also occur – for example, mixing ammonia and bleach releases toxic chlorine gas. And repeated overexposure to antimicrobial pesticides can cause chronic health problems for workers.

The label is the law

Pesticide labels are not advisory – they have the force of law. It is illegal to use a pesticide differently from label instructions. If an injury or illness results from this illegal use, you as an employer could be subject to significant fines and other penalties.

The product label has a set of detailed instructions that help you and your employees get maximum benefit from the product at minimum risk.

The label is your main source of information on how to use the product correctly, safely, and legally. The label will detail what safety precautions need to be taken, and if protective clothing (such as gloves, goggles, or breathing mask) needs to be worn. If those instructions are there, it is because the product poses a hazard to skin, eyes, or lungs. If there is an accident or illness, the label identifies the pesticide active ingredient so medical personnel can provide proper treatment.

Complying with the rules

Under State law, the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) and departments of

**How DPR Title 3 and
Cal/OSHA Title 8
Regulations Correspond**

CCR Title 3 (Title 8)
6700 (3200 & 3202)
6702 (3200 & 3203)
6704 (None*)
6706 (None)
6710 (None)
**6720 (No corresponding
Title 8 section; employers
must comply with 6720)**
6723 (3203, 3204 & 5194)
6724 (3203 & 5194)
6728 (None)
6730 (None)
6732 (3367)
6734 (3363 & 3366)
6736 (3383)
6738 (3380 - 3385 & 5144)
6740 (3317)
6742 (5141)
6744 (3203 & 51940)
Articles 3,4,5 & 6 (None)

*"None" means employers
do not have to comply
with the corresponding
Title 3 regulations.



Single copies of this
handout are available
from DPR by calling
916-324-4100,
and can be downloaded
from DPR's Web site,
www.cdpr.ca.gov

agriculture in each county of the state (in San Francisco, the Department of Consumer Assurance) enforce pesticide laws in workplaces where pesticides are used, whether in agriculture, industrial or institutional settings, offices, or retail establishments.

What employers need to know

All California employers are required to provide a safe workplace and to require their employees to follow safe work practices. To do this, employers must have written illness and injury prevention plans and ensure that employees are trained before handling any pesticide. In nonagricultural workplaces where antimicrobial pesticides are used, safety requirements drawn up by DPR and by the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) are essentially equivalent, and employers may develop an illness and injury prevention program under either set of rules. *See table at left for key to matching DPR and Cal/OSHA regulation code sections.*

Cal/OSHA workplace safety requirements are in the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 8, the illness and injury prevention rules in Section 5194. (They can be downloaded from www.dir.ca.gov/counters/t8index.htm.)

DPR's rules are in CCR Title 3, with the worker safety rules generally starting at Section 6700. (The regulations are on DPR's Web site, www.cdpr.ca.gov, click on "A-Z Index," then "California Code of Regulations, Title 3.")

Generally, the rules require employers to ensure employees are aware of potential hazards in the workplace and are trained to deal with them. Employers are required to provide any safety equipment (such as gloves or goggles) required on a pesticide label. You must keep safety equipment in good repair and make sure employees use it.

Employers must post written pesticide safety information where the employee usually starts the workday. You may choose to use DPR's handout, *Safety Rules for Pesticide Handlers in Non-Agricultural Settings*, Pesticide Safety Information Series leaflet N-8, which is available on DPR's Web

site, www.cdpr.ca.gov (click on "A-Z Index," then on "Safety series").

Employee rights

You must inform your employees that they have the right to:

- ◆ Look at pesticide use records (if maintained by the employer) and material safety data sheets (MSDS) on chemicals to which they may be exposed. (MSDSs are available from the vendor of the product.)
- ◆ File confidential complaints about unsafe work conditions without being punished by the employer, and have those complaints promptly investigated.
- ◆ Emergency medical care.

If illnesses or injury occur

You must plan for emergency medical care, and inform your employees of the name and location where this care is available. In California, physicians are required to report pesticide-related injury or illnesses to the county health officer, who in turn reports the illness to the County Agricultural Commissioner for investigation. Commissioner staff investigates pesticide-related illnesses and injuries. They may visit workplaces, take samples of pesticide products, and interview employees. Should they find a violation of pesticide laws or regulations, they can levy fines and other penalties.

For more information

This handout is a brief overview of the pesticide requirements in workplaces where antimicrobial pesticides are used. Get more information online at Cal/OSHA, www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH/dosh1.html, or from DPR, www.cdpr.ca.gov. You can also call DPR's Pesticide Enforcement Branch, 916-324-4100.

You can also call your regional Cal/OSHA office or your County Department of Agriculture for information on workplace safety. Call your County Department of Agriculture (in San Francisco, the Department of Consumer Assurance). You can find the number in the government section of your white pages, or on our Web site, www.cdpr.ca.gov, click on "Contact Us" and then on the list of County Agricultural Commissioner phone numbers.